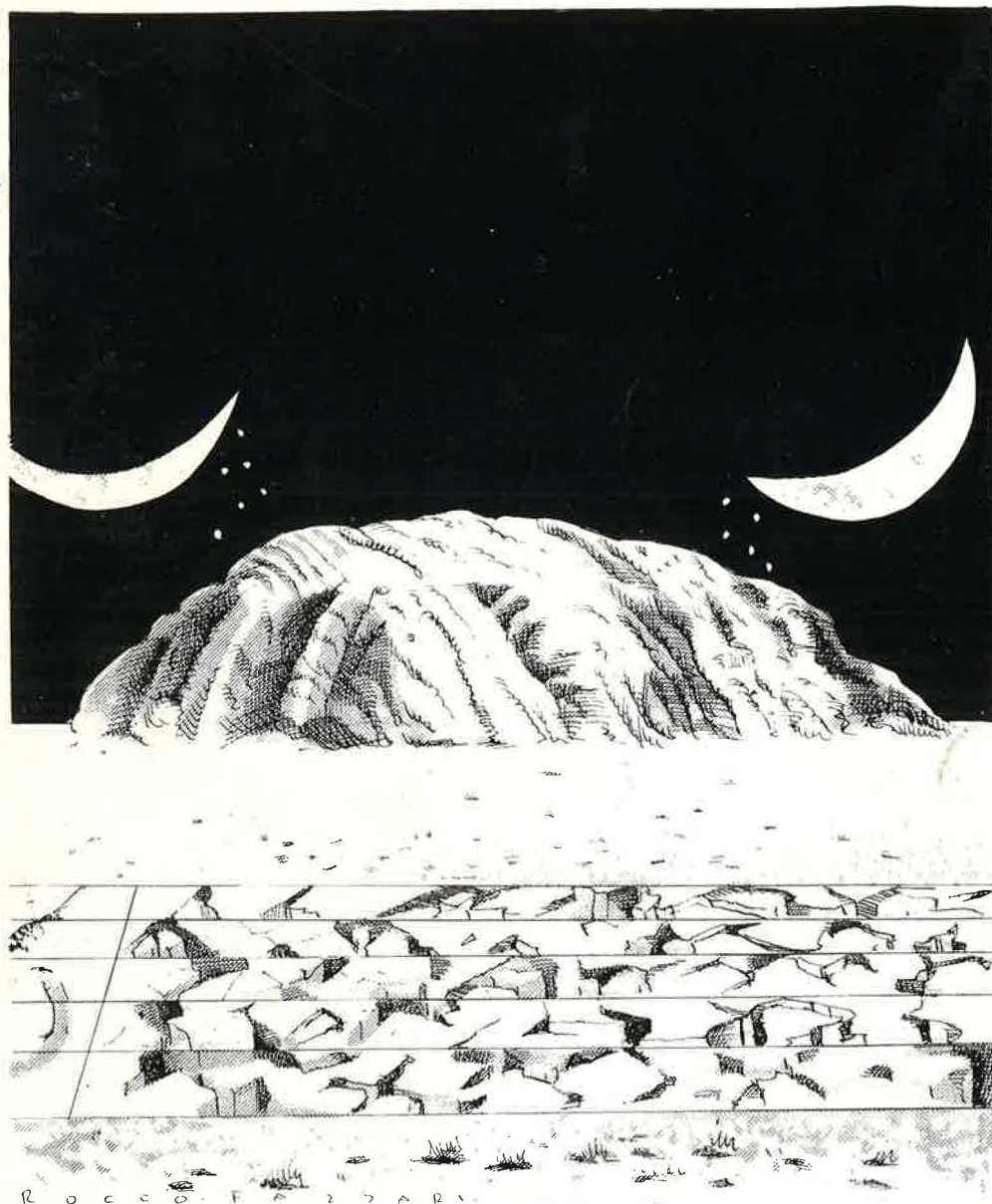


No. 34
Winter 1992

REFERENCE
COLLECTION

Sounds Australian

Journal of Australian music



AUSTRALIAN MUSIC CENTRE LTD
LIBRARY / RESOURCE CENTRE

ACN 001 250 595

P.O. Box N690
Grosvenor Place NSW
2000

Tel: (02) 247 4677 - Fax: (02) 241 2873
Toll Free Number: (1800) 651 834

AN EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIAN COMPOSITION

34 composers in all directions

BEST POSSIBLE MUSIC STATION

Bebbington, Crawford, Elder, Ford, Southwood, Toop

- Bent Perspectives: We of the Ugly-Ugly
- Modern Music is Growing Younger
- Research: Contemporary Music Audiences in Sydney
- Reviews: recordings, books, music

Sounds Australian

Journal of Australian music

Number 34, Winter 1992

AUSTRALIAN MUSIC CENTRE LTD
LIBRARY / RECORDS CENTRE

ACT 001 200 551

P.O. Box N380
Grosvenor Place NSW
2000

1st Floor, 18 Argyle St
The Rocks, NSW
2000

Tel: (02) 247 4877 - Fax: (02) 241 2873
Toll Free Number: (1800) 651 834

CONTENTS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Roger Frampton, Juliet Hoey, Ernie Althoff, Chris Matters1

BENT PERSPECTIVES

We of the Ugly-Ugly - Michael Lonsdale4

SURVEY

Contemporary Music Audiences in Sydney - Fiona Allan5

AN EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIAN COMPOSITION

Michael Smetanin, Don Kay, David Worrall, Bruce Cale,
Betty Beath, Ann Carr-Boyd, Peter Brideoake, Graeme Gerrard,
Eric Gross, Andrew Ford, Raffaele Marcellino, Michael Whiticker,
Thomas Reiner, Warren Burt, Neil Currie, Stephen Benfall,
Mary Mageau, Colin Bright, Haydn Reeder, Nigel Butterley,
Stephen Cronin, Robert Allworth, Ron Nagorcka, Ian Fredericks,
Stephen Whittington, Ross Edwards, Liza Lim, Carl Vine,
Claudio Pompili, Elena Kats-Chernin, Jennifer Fowler, Helen Gifford,
Anne Boyd, Edward Cowie - *edited by Ian Shanahan and Chris Dench*8

BEST POSSIBLE MUSIC BROADCASTER

Andrew Ford, Bruce Elder, Charles Southwood, Warren Bebbington,
John Crawford, Richard Toop - *edited by Richard Letts*33

AUSTRALIA LIVE

Modern Music is Growing Younger - Peter McCallum42

RECORD REVIEWS

- *Peter McCallum, Peter Platt, Hans Licht, Neville Cohn, Geoff Page*44

BOOK REVIEW

The Pink Violin by Jon Rose and Rainer Linz
- *Reviewed by Warren Burt*51

MUSIC PUBLICATION REVIEW

Australian Piano Miniatures (Bk 2) - Reviewed by Sheila Learmonth52

COVER ILLUSTRATION: *Rocco Fazzari*

An Emotional Geography of Australian Composition

Edited by Ian Shanahan and Chris Dench

Introduction

"Our aim is simply to present, and provide a linking commentary upon, the clearly-stated artistic beliefs of a number of Australian composers, covering as wide a stylistic spectrum as possible. We are optimistic that such a collection of brief 'Composer Credos' or 'Manifestos' will serve to raise the level of understanding of each others' work within the Australian compositional community (at both the aesthetic and philosophical levels) - as well as encouraging mutual respect and recognition of composerly unity. We therefore request from you ... a concise enunciation of compositional purpose."

With this brief, we approached quite a sizeable number of our Australian colleagues. [1] Not merely to elicit a reply to the simplistic question "Why do you compose?" (which one composer below rightly denounces), but more to find out "Why does composition matter to you?" and "What do you understand to be its purpose?". Our primary intention, then, in gathering together such a variegated set of writings, has been to increase the level of informedness and sensitivity for any future discussion or debate on the subject of Australian music - this concern being particularly important in the light of recent acrimony.

Both of us, however, do recognise the limitations of the journalistic medium: cassette presentation of a composer's music, and hence their artistic intent, is arguably the ideal format (as Warren Burt noted in his covering letter to us and Michael Whitticker points out herein), although, on the basic grounds of expense, it is rather utopian. So unfortunately, one must be pragmatic and settle for a "typical score page", admittedly a less-than-perfect substitute for "the music" - in particular for those composers who do not furnish their art on (manuscript) paper.

At any rate, our collection of succinct responses is about as diverse and idiosyncratic - linguistically, syntactically, and in terms of actual content - as the various musical personalities themselves. Therein, we trust, lies its fascination.

Nonetheless, certain commonalities, recurring themes and modes of reply did emerge. The impact of Peter Sculthorpe's landscape-based musical vision, for instance, is perhaps made apparent by the number of composers who claimed that Australia's characteristic topography has - or has not - been an influence in their music. Some replies were deeply personal (Ross Edwards) or anecdotal; others focussed upon sociological or cultural issues

(David Worrall) and/or environmental concerns (Ron Nagorcka). Certain composers were tongue-tied: these acoustical creators found the task of verbally articulating their compositional vision to be almost insurmountably daunting, indeed well-nigh impossible. (Stephen Cronin, for example, stated that "I'd prefer to let the music stand alone".) The remaining responses ranged from the mystical and metaphysical through to the abstract or intellectual. We leave it to the reader to wend their way through this multi-dimensional labyrinth of thought, and unravel the complex network of interconnections.

Anyway, let the proceedings now begin with an incisive statement from Michael Smetanin.

Michael Smetanin

When composers are invited to articulate their reasons for composing, they are being requested to perform one of the most difficult tasks their profession can expect of them. I suspect that most of us do not have a written credo, framed, hanging on the wall before which we genuflect each morning as we begin to compose, but within us, we all have (to varying extents) needs and ways in which to compose. This, I suppose, is the essence of a composer's musical

Don Kay

My music is triggered by all sorts of stimuli, abstract, metaphorical and literal. It is often a mix of these things in varying and unpredictable orders and quantities. In recent years I have become aware that the more I recognise the origin of the stimulus, the freer the music becomes, so that pitch, rhythmic, textural, timbral and dynamic shapes and patterns are more easily manipulated in response to other than purely abstract ideas.

I believe this increased openness is due in part to a desire to identify with my place of origin: to have my music be at one with the place I live in and love. The love has always been there but a means to express it in an appropriately individual manner has only gradually developed. This has been due, I believe, to only a partially conscious pursuit of the means. It hasn't been an exclusive compositional pursuit. However, I now realise that for me it has been most significant in my development.

I now have much greater confidence in the ability of music to interpret, for example, the forms, colours and textures of the natural world.

I also regard my compositions as a social act in part as I want to communicate to people about thoughts, places and ideas: to draw attention to my part of the world as a place to value. Mostly, though, I compose compulsively, each work representing a stage in self-discovery and I delight when the music generates positive response in others.

It is not uncommon for place of origin to provide strong creative motivation across all the arts. This is universally understood and acknowledged. I am fortunate, indeed, to have Tasmania as my birth and work place.



Don Kay. Photo - Fred Koolhof

David Worrall

Exploring the Australian Context: A Reflection

The plethora of cultural roots extant in Australia, together with a general profound dissatisfaction or disinterest with traditional concepts of "nation" and "nationality" ensures that Australia is unlikely to ever develop as strong a national identity as older nation states have.

Economic rationalism as a defining creed for social interaction is rife in the "new" world. It is irrationally rational in not taking into account the importance of human values - values which are exposed, explored and defined in and by the arts and give richness and meaning to all our activities. To think of the arts industry as simply a provider of (cultural) services is to truly miss the point. Until the central role that artists play in constructing their communities' identities is generally recognised and supported as the essential activities that they are, Australians will continue to be culturally pubescent.

Because Australians don't have very deep common social roots, we

tend to be blown about in the flatulent breezes of other social/political/economic "new world order" experiments, whilst at the same time not grasping the significance of experiment and innovation in maintaining cultural resilience. Many Australian artists feel that they can't live here, and many of us who do find living here extremely difficult "culturally" - even arid. The jingoisms that so dominate public definitions of ourselves as Australians in the present social and political climate are shallow nostalgic resonances of a fundamentally irrelevant past.

This criticism is necessary - it functions to identify the milieu in

which I as a creative artist, as a social animal, find myself. On a recent visit to cities in western NSW I was struck by the pathetic way overt exploitation of the relatively recent colonial past is being glorified by European Australians in trying to establish a sense of continuity, of purpose, of reason for being there; and at the same time, the way that local aboriginal peoples and their cultures are consistently ignored. Much as we might like to think about and incorporate aboriginal concepts and ideas - and even sounds - into our art music, until we are prepared to grow and learn from these peoples' contributions to contemporary living in a radically different way than we have to date, we will continue to be the disadvantaged.

European composers have a well of folk music to draw upon - even if today they do not do so overtly. I am very aware that I don't have any folksongs which are readily definable as my own. This "missing fundamental" means that I do not have as direct an emotional vocabulary for communicating with my listeners as my European colleagues have.

I live in Australia and I write

of my musical life, there appears to be at least four significant events which have shaped and helped my musical understanding. These are:

Becoming a player member of the Bryce Rohde Quartet in Sydney during the early '60s. The Quartet was a "modern jazz" band which played the original compositions of pianist/composer Bryce Rohde. The music stretched all the boundaries of the art form at that time: it was a great learning experience for me as a double-bassist.

As a member of this band, I was introduced to "The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation" by American George Russell. This Concept is the backbone of my theoretical knowledge; I studied with George Russell in the U.S.A.

Living in Los Angeles during the 70s, the then principal bassoonist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Fred Dutton, commissioned me to compose a piece for a concert performance in Los Angeles. The music was a success, and brought about my continued interest in composing music to this day.

During the late 80s here in Australia, I became interested in extended woodwind techniques as a part of my written music. The composer/recorder-player Ian Shanahan, has, by the nature of his knowledge and enthusiasm towards music, inspired me to further developments in the growth of my music composition.

One of the abiding preoccupations of post-war music (and, indeed, arguably, all Western Art Music) is the investigation and expansion of instrumental resources. As inhabitants of the Pacific fringe many Australians have inevitably pushed their experimentation towards the Asian shore ...

Betty Beath

Although I am moving in new directions much of my work has been written for the voice with piano, instrumental or orchestral accompaniment. This is not simply because the voice is a favourite instrument. I do think the voice has a unique ability to communicate at a very personal level but has, as well, the ability to express feelings

which are universally understood, without regard for language as such. However, as I love words and the meanings of words, the text is tremendously important to me. I sometimes take months to find the text which I know is just right to set. I will have a very definite, certain response when this happens. I am very much aware that the quality of the text has a corresponding relationship to the quality of the music it provokes. During the period when I am thinking about a poem and again in the actual writing, I feel strongly linked with the intention and thought of the poet through the text. To be satisfying, the end result ... the song, must be faithful to the intention of the poet as expressed through the text.

I have not consciously made a search for exotic material. The fact that some of the writers may be, is probably co-incidental ... in that my choice has to do with content, simplicity, communication. In the case of Javanese poets whose work I have set, there is a small qualification, for not only was I attracted by the beauty of their

Slow Step 10

Excerpt from Ann Carr-Boyd's "Slow Step", from her solo harpsichord work, *Suite for Véronique*.

poetic expression, I have also made a significant response to their country which is a continuing and lively influence in my work and in my life. Though I know Indonesia or indeed, Asia to be an important influence, I believe my music to be essentially Australian in character.

I haven't defined my compositional "style". I notice change and hope for change especially as it emerges naturally. To cast myself in some form of compositional mould would be terrifying. There are always influences and I think we naturally select those we will use most successfully. I believe that in creating a work we sub-consciously draw on the experience of our lives and that we are very much influenced by the landscape, the depth and breadth of our horizons and the rhythm and tempo of our language. I find myself "listening" much of the time ... I'm interested in new work, and "new" sounds are a wonderful discovery, even though they may be ancient - like the gamelans in Indonesia or the sounds of a corroboree.

Ann Carr-Boyd

Everyone is a product of their particular era. In my lifetime, there has been a revolution in communication: in music, the developments in performing and recording have meant access to a huge variety of styles at the flick of a radio button or CD control. In the same way that architecture of the glass box variety has invaded much of the globe, an international "wallpaper" music of the dominant/tonic variety has developed and invaded areas where once only the dingo and humming-bird reigned. It seems that ease of communication can produce blandness. I'm conscious of wishing to make my own small statement as personal as it's feasible to do.

I have always been fascinated by harmonies and chords, as well as the different lights they can cast in juxtaposition with each other and set into motion - and so I often work my melodic and rhythmic ideas around contrasting harmonic colours. I'm also conscious of the need for a tonal centre - a base from which to explore and return. I try to tie these ideas in with the overall form, so that the form can

highlight the contents of the work and communicate meaning and direction to the performer and listener. I'm continually fascinated by the physics of sound and the "pull" of one sound toward another. [2] And I too (as in the "Slow Step" of *Suite for Véronique*) have succumbed to the powerful dictatorship of the V - I progression.

In the final result, I think that constructional means should serve to produce something which appeals and gives emotional satisfaction in a way which belongs so particularly to music.

Peter Brideoake

Music and enjoyment readily form a common association - for example, in the Chinese language, these words share the same written character. The enjoyment of sound may be deeply felt or simply entertainment; there are many versions of what is musically enjoyable. We may join with others who share similar ideas and easily feel disapproval when music and enjoyment appear in unsatisfying or disturbing versions.

I compose music which I like, with the intention that some others will also find meaning and therefore enjoyment as I do in the sounds produced.

It is unlikely that many will dance to it; too few consumers will sing along (making it an unsuitable chart contender), and I am unlikely to start a new movement or fashion. Nevertheless, I am interested in expressing musical thoughts which will resonate with some part of an audience.

I aspire to create individual and worthy music, and I pursue this goal with certain desired ideals:

- It is necessary to absorb compositional techniques and methods, to a point where I need not rely upon them, and still avoid music which is indulgent, amorphous or confused.

- To be unreserved about direct expression (feeling, emotion, or passion), but capable of coherence which avoids artifice and construction.

- Not to be limited by the necessary lessons of tradition, yet still avoiding fads or novelties

while creating an individual voice.

These may be unattainable, perhaps even overly pious. (Should I have included ... to be rich, envied and famous?)

They are, nonetheless, worthy, since they seek to achieve what I consider to be an ideal richness of expression.

Achieved or not, I compose for my own satisfaction; all the better if I am not alone in enjoying it.

Graeme Gerrard

Why I compose music

I am not aware of any singular motivation for composing music. I like the way others can be categorical, but I can't. I think "everything is true", every position is valid within its context. That's not the same as sitting on fences, hedging bets, etc.

Because I make electronic music, I am very much involved with the creation of sound and the realisation of music, as well as the composition. These are all integral aspects of a single activity.

I compose music because (not in any significant order that I am aware of, other than as they occur to me):

- I take delight in patterning, both formally and semantically.
- I am compulsed/addicted.
- I love playing with sound, it's one of my favourite manifestations of vibration.
- I bounce off fortuitous accidents in the studio.
- Discovery is absolutely fundamental.
- Sometimes I have "something to say".
- I believe that art is more profound in its impact on consciousness than politics or religion.
- It doesn't "need" to be done. That is, it is a deliberate act counter to a world based on utility.
- I like to - better than washing dishes or programming accountancy packages. Composing is usually much more demanding work. But I like work.
- I enjoy the feeling when other people respond to the music I make



Graeme Gerrard. Photo - Craig Beard

- a mixture of pride and humility.
 - Sometimes I get money for it.
 - It is kind of an act of worship or recognition - though not of anyone or anything in particular.

All of these reasons, and probably others, have been appropriate in the past: each composition has its own constellation of motivations. There may be others in the future.

One thing that is clear is that Australian composers cast their nets very wide in terms of the associations that they construct around their pieces. This cannot be unconnected with the character of the Australian populace, and the perception of our society as a melting-pot; unity in diversity, perhaps.

Eric Gross

Virtually all of my music has been composed for immediate live performance or for recording purposes. A number of my compositions also resulted from my association, as conductor, with choral or orchestral organizations. I believe that my first duty as a composer, in addition to maintaining professional and artistic

standards and integrity, is to my performers/interpreters because it is they who must work and invest time and energy in order to bring my music to life and place it before its audience. My music must convince its performers before it can convince its audience. I aim to communicate with audiences by stating musical ideas which audiences may find to have some relevance to their own musical perceptions or requirements. If I am asked to write music for a specific occasion, then I try to make it appropriate to that happening and if such an "occasional" composition has sufficient intrinsic merit, it may perhaps survive and be given further

performances. I have used some of my compositions to make political statements either by implication, as in my orchestral work *Na Shledanou v Praze* - its first performance took place in Olomouc, a Czech city with a Russian garrison on its outskirts at the time of the performance and I therefore used the Czech National Anthem as my main theme - or by the use of pertinent philosophical or political texts, as in my cantata *Pacem in Terris* which uses textual extracts from an encyclical, of the same name, by Pope John XXIII; I composed this work during 1966 when Khrushchev foreshadowed the beginning of the end of Stalinism in the USSR and the advent of the Kennedy presidency in the USA raised hopes of political and social progress in the Western world.

In addition to a predilection for Jazz idioms, my world-wide travels and cultural experiences tend to give my music a cosmopolitan flavour with some traces of Austrian, Scottish, Asian and South American influences emerging from time to time. Although I like to use existing compositional and instrumental techniques, I enjoy experimentation, especially when a sympathetic virtuoso is available, as for example in some of my



Eric Gross

mandolin, recorder or trombone pieces; I also like to use unusual combinations whenever possible, as in my *First Symphony* where within a large orchestra I use a harpsichord and three counter-tenors who are seated in the woodwind section.

Perhaps the very elaboration of their ideas has in some cases led to an unwillingness or discomfort in discussing their musical purpose. It is not unreasonable to argue that one's music is self-evident, or that one's intention is inarticulable, as it is imminently manifest in the piece. This almost mystical stance is frequently advanced by our contributors; its antithesis the pragmatic nuts-and-bolts approach, likewise. I wonder how different they really are?

Andrew Ford

Dear Ian and Chris,

This is in response to your request for statements from composers.

I hate all this. I like talking about music - indeed, I have said in print on more than one occasion how vital it is that we talk about music more than we do. As a society we have tended in recent times to regard music as charming and innocuous or offensively intrusive; at any rate, not something to be discussed in terms of its ideas. For all this, and notwithstanding my public pontifications as University lecturer, broadcaster and print journalist on a whole range of other people's music, I find it very hard to come up with words to describe what I try to do in my own work. As a composer, I pride myself on my professionalism when it comes to delivering pieces on schedule; my program notes, on the other hand, are invariably late.

It may be that I am rather superstitious (cute, even) about all this. I worry that the moment I can verbally articulate my intentions and working methods - even to myself - I may become too self-conscious in my music. Self-consciousness is something I try to avoid when I compose. I suppose I am also aware that on the occasions when I have attempted to explain my aims, my aesthetics, my techniques, I

have sounded (to me, at least) either pretentious or mind-numbingly banal. I'd prefer not to be thought of as either of these!

So what can I say? I like to trust my instincts. New pieces come to me, not I to them. I try to see (hear) what they consist of. I take my time doing this, preferring to mull over a piece for months before writing anything down. When I have the shape of the whole piece (instrumentation, duration, relative tempi, textures, dynamics) I make a plan of it with words, diagrams, perhaps a few bits of musical notation. (All of this is without hearing any specific pitches.) I try to stick to this plan, but usually don't succeed.

I apply pitches. I've come to believe that pitch is the single most important feature of music (both my own music and the music I most admire). I may work to a loose harmonic plan and make it up as I go; a couple of times recently I have plotted a very strict set of pitch charts and adhered to them rigidly. The pieces sound especially convincing (although I'm not letting on which ones they are), but it's a dull way to work - like colouring by numbers.

You asked for 300 words, and I've written 400. Sorry, I'm not sure how useful all this is. I look forward, however, to reading what the others have written!

Cheers ... Andy.

Raffaele Marcellino

Manifesto

Music is a temporal sonic art. Memory is essential for music. A composer is anyone with an idea to be expressed through the medium of sounds and silences and who actually carries out that expression of the idea. It is the role of the composer to re-hear. Paul Klee stated that the artist should lead the eye: the composer should "lead the ear". There are no absolutes in music. Writing music is a political act, whether the composer is aware or not of the politics. The principal reasons for a composer to create music are to express an idea through sound, to have a point of view, to show other ways of

listening, and to communicate sonic ideas to others. Writing music is a cultural act. Writing music must have the purpose of communicating to a listener. Music is not a universal language. There is no point in developing a syncretic style - music cannot be all things to all people. The listener is not the enemy. Music means nothing and therefore can mean anything. Music is a cultural phenomenon. The mystic has a vision to which reason is applied. The composer shares in the function of the mystic in the sense of the "sonic" vision.

Or, as one of us once said:

"As I see it, composing is, in essence, the making manifest of a particular vision, an envisaged musical domain that is, for the composer, unendurably absent from the expanding musical universe. This 'vision' is not just of a particular piece, but of a whole territory of musical utterance of which the work in hand is a specific instance. In this context the act of creation takes on meanings which will inevitably colour the product: the composer becomes a cartographer, exploring and mapping previously unrealized states of musical being, and a shaman, manifesting these states partly or wholly transformed so as to be assimilable by his/her audience. The attempt to share this vision is, one hopes, an investment of generosity of spirit which will irradiate the resulting artwork." [3]

Michael Whitticker

A response

1. An aesthetic? *WHY, HOW, and FOR WHOM* do we compose?

2. My natural response to a request for a "composer credo" for *Sounds Australian Journal* is that I would prefer readers to be listening to a piece of my music instead of considering what I might have to say about "my artistic beliefs". Which, in this case, would mean that you (the reader) would be receiving a cassette recording of the music of the composers here

which we perceive and act upon the world and each other".

- Anthony Wilden: *System and Structure*.

Thomas Reiner

Fragments for Chris' and Ian's Emotional Geography of Australian Composition

(with reference to clearly-stated artistic beliefs, credos, manifestos, concise enunciations of compositional purpose, and other imaginary landscapes)

"Why do you compose?" is a dinner-party question..." (Jörg Todzy, private conversation, 1991.)

"Words (the mechanism whereby others know what you think better than you do) are vulnerable to distraction..." (Chris Mann, *Listening - the aesthetics of not knowing*, 1991.)

"The appeal of Clear Thought - or what is frequently conceived of clear thought, plain speech and pragmatism - is not new, but it is, in the current climate, acquiring a new and insidious currency. This trend, it seems to me, is related to the question of bureaucratic thinking."

(Lesley Stern, from a paper delivered at the *Ideas for Australia Conference* in Melbourne, February 1992.)

"In its urgency to become sound, in its haste to come into the world, to make itself manifest, music by its nature tends to make manifestos superfluous. The path it takes is never expected, required, prescribed. Music ignores theoretical correctives, and dissolves dogma whenever it wishes." (Hans Werner Henze, *Music and Politics*, 1982.)

"Because of the disposable nature of our society, music has lost its currency." (Harrison Birtwistle, *The Age*, 18 May

ACT UP! for Charles Roberts -for reader/pianist

SLOWLY, IN SPEECH RHYTHMS, WITH MOUNTING EMOTION. CA. 8 SECONDS/SYSTEM. VOICE, IN A COMFORTABLE OCTAVE, DOUBLES PITCH INFLECTIONS OF BOTTOM LINE.

-WARREN BURT

The U S A can-not af-ford ba-sic im-mune sys-tem re-search to con-quer AIDS.

It could af-ford the Gulf War. U-gan-da can-not af-ford free con-doms. It can af-ford an ar-my. Aus-tral-ia can-not af-ford an in-fec-tious dis-eas-es re-search hos-pital.

It can af-ford to build sub-mar-ines. THEY will keep chop-sing DEATH o-ver life-- UN-LY WE ACT UP!

B-9 March, 1992

1991.)

"...if the sky was paper and all of the seas of the world were ink, I could not describe to you my sufferings, and all I see around me. I'm saying goodbye to everyone and weep..." (Chaim, a 14 year old Polish peasant boy. From a collection of letters written by members of the European resistance prior to their execution. Set to music in Luigi Nono's *Il Canto Sospeso*.)

"What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*

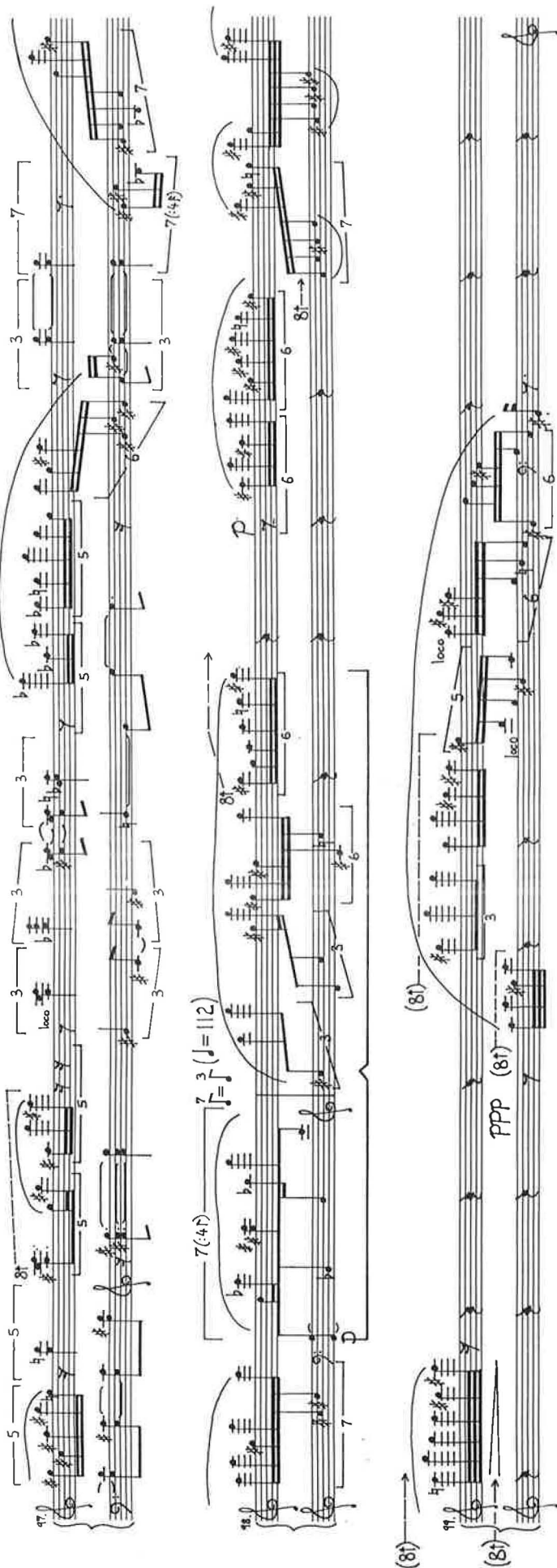
Logico-Philosophicus.)

Warren Burt

Some relevant quotes and thoughts

- "As a social phenomenon, music is, first and foremost, behaviour, the behaviour of individuals and groups of people in a variety of environmental circumstances, all the characteristics of which bear on the meaning of the music in question." -B. Boretz

- "Music making is too precious a resource to be squandered in a

Excerpt from Stephen Benfall's solo piano work *Hammers* (1991).

quest for authority." -B. Boretz

- All music is ethnic. All music is tribal. All musics have hidden agendas. All musics have social briefs. All musics reinforce/predict social/political structures. (How complicit are you?)

- Personal opinion may be fun. It may even produce good art. But "taste" may be counterproductive to doing "work".

- "What if we replaced every 'either/or' statement with a 'both/and' statement?" -K. Gaburo

- "Are you criticising the piece because it wasn't the piece you wanted to hear, or are you criticising the piece you heard?" -R. Paredes

- "Music (art) as a discipline of self-alteration as well as a means of self-expression." -J. Cage

- In a time of language plurality, art is commonly incomprehensible. [More clear, simple explanations, please!]

- The *observer* creates the work of art. [So that the work of art they create might come within coo-ee of the work of art *you* created!]

- "To make life easier" is not necessarily part of an artist's job description. ("Being paid" to break the rules.)

- "Social responsibility arises through love. (Love = mutual acceptance - the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference.) When you love, you feel (and act) responsibly. This is the beginning of society. Therefore, anything that interferes with the free flow of love - like competition - is inherently anti-social." -H. Maturana

- "The creative act consists not only in the stipulation and formation of concrete structures, but in responsible maintenance of them. Furthermore, such structures demand of us the necessity to create and maintain environmental systems within which they can function properly." -K. Gaburo

- Are you composing your context or is your context composing you?

- Art music makers of the world! You want your music to transform society? Then transform yourselves! Be an example to the world with loving and generous lives, and the rest will follow.

- "Greed, anger, ignorance; drink deep those poisoned wines and lie drunk and in darkness, unknowing. Make riches your dream, your dream's an iron cage. Bitterness is cause of bitterness. Give it up or dwell within that dream. You better wake up soon - wake up and go home." -Shih-te

- (And personally? I like to make, and to help others make, music and art which conforms to no known models so that we, together, might have some things to help us change our minds.)

Neil Currie

To me, framing the question as an enunciation of compositional purpose is off-centre. My purpose as composer has in general emerged retroactively. For me, it has been more a matter of being attracted to a sound, and then only subsequently the empirical discovery, over the years, as to which experimentations have produced satisfactory extensions and variations of the sound.

In my opinion it is important for a young composer to spend more time simply attempting to discover who he or she is, aesthetically - and no delusion please, no matter whom you wish to impress - than it is to learn to pretend that serious art music must be 95% intellectual.

To me, the process of composition will always entail, at its core, an instinctual animal's (my) passive response to sound, my subsequent memory of the sound, and my modification of it, whether intuitive or calculated. The notion of setting forth armed only with a set of procedures, prior to the experience of falling under the spell of a sound, is to me, phony.

I accept that I can devise techniques, either from improvisation or from numerical procedures, that may produce

interesting music, but these things depend utterly on the character of the sound, they must follow the direction it bids, and they are inactive until I become enchanted with the sound in the first place. It is this, a feeling, a love, for the sound and an attention to the direction it suggests, that I believe precursus good music.

Stephen Benfall

For me, there seem to be various levels of compositional purpose active simultaneously. These range along a continuum from the subconscious (universal /

hard to imagine life without it - perhaps it's an addiction that could only be substituted by an equal vice in some other creative area.

On a technical level, I enjoy the nuts and bolts of musical craft, be they pitches, rhythms, sound samples, synthesizer parameter-tweaking, or whatever. Composing or "assembling" sound-works (in any genre) is a natural progression from an interest in sound-elements.

I have been involved in music as a performer and teacher, and although I enjoy wearing different "hats" (essential in any case for the well-rounded musician) I find composition the most exciting area of music - and after all, the possibilities are infinite.

Even the mystical stance can be subjected to a certain scrutiny; as Roland Barthes observed: "What is characteristic of myth? To transform meaning into form". Which could be advanced as a description of the compositional activity.

Mary Mageau

As believed in old China the composer knits heaven to earth with threads of sound.

I believe that my music must:

1. Express rather than impress.
2. Explore my intuitive feeling for the wholeness of things.
3. Communicate some spiritual or artistic meaning.
4. Convey my

personal message through a continually developing craft.

There is a place for the music of each and everyone, as Henry David Thoreau so passionately declared:

"If a man (or woman) does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears however measured or far away."



Mary Mageau

creative disposition) through the more conscious and musically specific levels of sound exploration and manipulation, and along (or is it down to?) the concerns of where and how to land my next commission.

I produce relatively few works, yet I identify strongly with the creative side of my personality. I have been composing regularly for over 10 years, and I now find it

Colin Bright

1) I do not consciously think about style in terms of fashionable (or not) technique, but I consider it of utmost importance to develop a *personal style* which has a larger and more important brief, guided by a social-realist perspective, that is ultimately an attempt to define the culture of which I am a part.

Insofar as stylistic technique is concerned, I find the total adoption of other cultural models too sycophantic for my liking, and ultimately just a more

sophisticated version of the cultural cringe.

To put it another way, I do not look for cultural guidance from the "savage tribes" of Europe or Britain.

Nevertheless, my music is "informed" by external influences including daedalism, exotericism, Australian aboriginal music, some S-E Asian music and some African music. Add to this intuition and the multi-stylistic consequence is perhaps some personal style.

2) Art must be of its time to be socially relevant. The most

obvious connection here is with music incorporating a text. The subject matter simply must be about *NOW* either topically or psychologically. Social-realism, musically, implies the non-relevance of past cultural styles in their original context.

(Personally, I like minor triads, but to use them in a functional harmonic way is not culturally relevant now.)

3) There are a couple of challenges that are not new but are nevertheless still challenges. The instrumentation of almost all ensembles that a composer might write for is a limitation directly

inherited from a European acoustic tradition. Imagine trying to get a performance of a piece for say, half an orchestra (2,2,2,2,3,2,2,1, hp,pno, 4pc,8,7,6,5,4) plus 4 synthesizers, 4 saxes, 4 guitars, electric guitar, didjeridu, bagpipe, blues harp, and 4 female voices. (+PA). Fat chance!

Sometimes too, I think that if an instrument is not able to be played outdoors (and/or amplified) then it is more or less useless.

A simpler, but more subtle challenge is to write a melody, say for voice, that is truly melody and not a line impelled by harmony. To retrieve melody from the vice of functional harmony is no small matter!

[4]

Haydn Reeder

Why do I compose the way I do?

For me, in common with many composers, the act of composition is an adventure of exploration and expansion of my

Chromatalea

for flute/alto flute, clarinet in A/bass clarinet, violin/viola and violoncello

Haydn Reeder

Alto flute^(*)

Bass clarinet^(*)

Viola

Violoncello

5/8 $\text{♩} = 72$

4 $\text{♩} = ca 50$

3/4

3/4

4/4

3/4

2/4

NV = non vibr., VN = vibr. norm., MV = molto vibr.
 cl = col legno, arco = wood + hair of bow, st = sul tasto, sp = sul pont.
 $\sharp = \frac{1}{2}$ tone higher, $\flat = \frac{1}{2}$ tone lower, $\sharp\sharp = \frac{1}{2}$ tone higher, $\flat\flat = \frac{1}{2}$ tone lower

^(*) sounds as written

© Copyright 1973 by Haydn Reeder

knowledge and imagination. The finished work is therefore an invitation to the audience to experience the results of those processes, but of course the audience cannot take part in all of the joys and tribulations of my adventure.

Since I am aiming to express myself and to produce a work which has a distinctive and clear "personality", I am always looking for, inventing and using different compositional techniques, but of course some techniques recur. Some of them, such as isorhythm, derive from earlier times in musical history but in such a case I am borrowing a technique and not a language or style. Composers who adopt a previously developed language or style tend to miss out on, have lost or never had interest in the adventure described above.

My language has developed since the days when I decided to take a leaf from Boulez's book and write music as if none had been written before and work with limited materials: the result of this was *Chromatalea* for small ensemble. Being able to control the material and produce a piece which was thoroughly worked out yet was all heard and which found favour with performers and audiences heralded a new phase in my career. Within my works there are areas of complexity - for instance, at about two-thirds of the way into my piece *Coalescence I and II* for piano and tape there is an explosion as four strata of material enter at once - but I would not be happy producing pieces that consist entirely of overloading the listener with information in an unremitting fashion.

Nigel Butterley

I'd rather not try and write a statement; I've tried before but never know what to say that doesn't sound pretentious. I'd rather redirect the effort towards writing music.

If you want to include me you could use the following quote, which says things far better than I could.

"Poetry and the other arts, by building for the soul invisible sanctuaries and regions of contemplation, by exploring and

extending the scope of our humanity, has created areas of inner freedom that we can, and do, inhabit, however circumscribed our outer conditions may be.

Poetry is in its proper nature the language of the soul; its proper function is to create for us images of an inner order all share, to open into every present those secret doors, those ways in; to consecrate and redeem for every generation some parcel of the surrounding waste."

(Kathleen Raine - *The Inner Journey of the Poet*)

Stephen Cronin

Thanks for the invite to submit a personal credo for *Sounds Australian Journal*. Unfortunately I'll decline the offer. I find it difficult to write and talk about my music and tend to agree with Mick Smetanin that I'd prefer to let the music stand alone. The problem with that stance is that my style is constantly undergoing change and a personal stylistic statement very quickly becomes outdated. Best of luck for the project in any case.

Robert Allworth

To me, music must convey something about life, or create a poetic mood. My music draws its inspiration mostly from the sacred aspects of Roman Catholicism, from certain traditions of past eras in Western civilization, and from classic works of literature that fascinate me: usually literature about colourful people in the history of art and religion.

My music is nearly always a very personal reminiscing utterance, particularly of my love for places which have a special significance to me. And I am delighted, even at times surprised, when other listeners can immerse themselves entirely in the

nostalgic moods of my music. Yet I do write music not only to communicate with those of this current age, but to engage, through time itself, with future generations as well.

Although my compositional language does not follow, and resists being defined in reference to, any particular trend within contemporary music, some of my compositions do, on occasion, enter into more cerebral or abstract manifestations. *A Different Time, A Different Place* (for violin and piano) and *Processional and Epilogue* (for alto recorder and vibraphone) both make use of aleatoric techniques, for instance. Nevertheless, much of my oeuvre can be referred to loosely as either "romantic", "impressionistic", or "serial".

Ron Nagorcka

Jacques Barzun once declared:

"I happen to think that only in music have truly new directions been found. And these are two and only two: electronic music and the 43-tone works of Harry Partch."

I have no idea, really, whether he's right, but these are certainly the areas I find myself exploring and re-exploring, especially as recent developments in electronics



Ron Nagorcka

make serious study of Partch's system much quicker and easier.

I do a lot of sampling - mostly of the sounds that surround me in the exquisite Tasmanian forest in which I'm privileged enough to live - with an instrument more and more permanently tuned to Partch's 43-tone scale. Apart from the rich new harmonic world it offers, it helps me relate my music to birdsongs which certainly involve more than 12 tones per octave. Some of the similarities I've found may be serendipitous, but at least with Partch's system I can invoke a harmonic scheme that makes some sense out of the communication of intelligences which, after all, share a different reality to our own.

Even as I write, I'm being entertained by a flock of green

rosellas, which always seem to have something new to say. And in the distance I can hear the chainsaws of APPM as yet another hillside of biodiversity is clearfelled for processing at the existing Wesley Vale pulp mill.

So the rape continues. Tasmanian Aboriginal people once cremated their dead in the hollow bottoms of giant trees, thus sending their spirits up into those magnificent heights. Now, the last of these trees is under threat by legislation giving land rights not to Aboriginal people, but to large forestry companies.

What a frontier culture we still have. Crass marketeering and pretentious imitative institutions continue to turn the intricacies of a thousand Dreamings into the

straight lines of a vast factory, churning out ecological poison for consumption by urban populations kept ignorant by the manipulations of greed.

Under such circumstances, let alone the threat of global Armageddon, music can only continue to strive to be magical - to retain its powers of transcendence and transformation, and to avoid the corruptions and soullessness that tempt our delicate compositional egos.

The sort of magic that I seek, I cannot find in a city. It is always so tangible in rainforests and deserts where I know my spirit is alive. And in the end - whenever that may be - I can only hope that the last of our kind, at their last sunset, will sing rather than curse

RONDOS ALLA DEVIL - CONTRABASS Chart.

truning

harmonics

1 $\frac{11}{8}$ U

2 $\frac{16}{9}$ 0

3 $\frac{7}{4}$ U

4 $\frac{16}{11}$ 0

5 $\frac{8}{7}$ 0

6 $\frac{3}{2}$ U

DISTURBANCE

DISTURBANCE

PROFUNDITY

ALL

ALL

ALL

R. H. 4/12
Burt Nagorska

their luck and the folly of their ancestors...

For music is a requirement of the soul.

"What I affirm", George Steiner recently wrote, "is the intuition that where God's presence is not longer a tenable supposition, and where His absence is no longer a felt, indeed overwhelming weight, certain dimensions of thought and creativity are no longer attainable". Erich Jantsch, in the Self-Organising Universe defined God as "evolution ... not the creator, but the mind of the universe".

Ian Fredericks

One composes because that's what one does. Just as one breathes. There is no reason. But "Why compose with computers?" (Now there's an insanity!)

I think some must. Even though it's actively discouraged.

I believe that the tools (technology) of a society are manifestations in "the real physical universe" of the state of intellectual development of that society. If art has any function in our society then I believe it is to exploit the intellectual tools provided by the contemporary technology to develop objects of meaning whereby we may express the spiritual perceptions which lie just beyond the reaches of our knowledge and our understanding of our "real" physical universe.

And my! How that knowledge and understanding has increased in the latter half of the twentieth century.

And my! How it has changed things.

The days of catching falling stars and chasing rainbows across the sky are gone forever.

Now is the time for chasing pions across the time-space continuum. Or black stars through five billion galaxies. Or a quark.

Now our dreams are to hunt a tachyon through a time warp. Or anti-matter into the abyss. Or bend light. Or photograph the singularity.

And some spend quiet moments of reflection searching for electrons

that probably aren't even there.

Until they find them.

Where then is God in all this? (Now that heaven is closed.)

We can't just stand by fiddling while the Stephen Hawkings and the Paul Davies move Him into a neighbouring universe.

The nature of God and of human spiritual needs should be the domain of theologians and philosophers. Not scientists. Trouble is the theologians seem to have planted their collective head in the quagmire of human rights and other socio-economic red herrings of no cosmic consequence whatever while the philosophers have sold the whole meta-physical farm to science.

If ever humanity needed spiritual guidance it's now.

And there is none.

Because there is no spiritual language which has sufficiently developed the grammatical constructs and the syntax powerful enough to express the intellectualism behind the intuitions from the depths of the modern psyche.

The Pandora's box is well and truly opened and no amount of scratching around in the remnants of failed cultures is going to release even one meandering photon to illuminate the modern spiritual dilemma. (Our super-massive black hole can lick their rainbow serpent any day of the week. And it's not even supernatural.)

Why compose with computers?

Fact is I like it! It is the hardest thing I have ever tried to do. (And I've tried some!) The constant changing of hats from engineer to computer programmer to scientist to artist tends towards a little confusion at times.

And trying to conjure up a perceptual image of a universe driven by quantum effects and chaotic dynamos stretches the intellect and the imagination into the abyss and beyond the reaches of ordinary sanity. Trying to turn such imaginings into "real physical objects" using the primitive computational tools available at present is a neuron burning exercise. But as long as I can sit back at the end of the day and hear

at least some of it come back at me through the technology then I know I'm not mad. And I am not wrong. And I'm certainly not dead.

If I could travel back to one of the past centuries and have just one old fashioned wish then it would be to come back in one hundred years from now when all the arrogance of the nineteenth century prejudices have been stomped into the dust that clings to the flutes and the violins in the disused museums and all the dead trees in the "music" archives.

And my wish would be to just attend one afternoon concert of art music.

What a time that will be!

How the sounds will fly and the music will weave a time-space thread of psychic intrigue no longer constrained by corporeal gesture but free at last to explore the reaches of modern spiritual yearnings. God is, after all, alive and well and living in hyper-space.

Why try and make computers make music?

Some must.

Stephen Whittington

Aphorisms from the composer's notebooks

Style's stale. Substance stands.

Abolish hier(higher)archies. Let a hundred net(note)works bloom.

Dismantle (mental) prisons.

Take music out of the University / into the Universe.

Reject the straight li(n)e of history.

Forget the music industry and listen to the music in this tree.

Material matters. Technique's immaterial.

We are each at the centre of the Universe and the only direction is out.

Don't pose: compose.

Sound (truth) is truth (sound). Sound (truth) is always radical.

Music defines what we are. Ask an (Ab)original.

Say (mean) what you mean (say). Life's too short for anything else.

© Copyright 1989 by Universal Edition (Australia) Pty. Ltd.

~ liza lim

κάδ δὲ μ' ἴδρως κακχέεται, τρόμος δὲ
παῖσαν ἀγρῖ, χλωρότερα δὲ ποῖας
ἐμμι, τεθνάνκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης
φαῖνομ' ἐμ' αὐτά.

~ SAPPHO (fl. 7600 B.C.)

Handwritten musical score for "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. The score is for four parts: fl (flute), sop (soprano), tb (trombone), and tp (trombone). It includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Handwritten annotations in purple ink provide performance instructions like "jazz vibrato", "gurgles/shaking", "slide vib.", and "hand vib.". The tempo is marked as quarter note = 58. The score is divided into sections labeled A and B.

Ross Edwards

Over the years, I've instinctively developed two very different but complementary styles of composition. One of these, characteristically austere and hermetic, is often called my *sacred* style because of its alignment with certain oriental traditions of music designed to promote spiritual meditation. It thus accords with my belief that art music today should be potentially useful outside the concert hall.

The other style (which has come to be known as my *maninya* style) is ostensibly hybrid, drawing on a variety of non-Western influences. Characterized by rhythmic buoyancy and obsessive, chant-like repetition, it seeks to reintroduce corporeal energy and a sense of levity into "serious" music. It naturally invites choreography.

These seemingly antithetical styles are linked by the fact that in each, the internal proportions of compositions - i.e., the relative lengths of rhythmic, phrase and periodic structures - have been profoundly influenced by my direct perception of the sounds and patterns of nature, especially those of insects.

By thus grounding my work in the natural environment, specifically that of my own native seaboard terrain of central New South Wales, I've evolved a highly subjective method of topographical symbolism

which is present in everything I write, however exotic the trappings. And since, for me, the act of composition has come to represent a ritualistic search for the life-force underlying our sterile, materialistic society, I'm particularly interested in communicating as vividly and directly as I can.

"It's only when all one knows of life is abstracted and used as an underlying statement of significant patterning that you have what is both beautiful and permanent" - Samuel R. Delany, in *Nova*.

Liza Lim

Some recurrent themes that occupy my compositional thinking

the performer :

the physicality of performance is central to the way I approach composition. Pitches, rhythms etc. are never thought of in purely abstract terms; that is, they cannot be transposed away from the relationships that exist between the musician's body and instrument. Hence, close collaborative relationships with particular performers are essential to my compositional process. More and more, my music is an act of observation, seeking to examine and "hear" ever more finely the

interstices of the sounds of contact arising from configurations of flesh, breath, wood, metal, hair ... and to compose the behaviour of sounds into constellations of actions and energies.

the labyrinth :

as a structural model for the multiplication of possibilities and as a non-narrative mode of thinking in which several perspectives might co-exist; also, for the sense of *mystery* embodied in its "quest" motif, e.g.: rites of passage, ceremonies of ritual death and rebirth.

noise : impure and unstable sounds acting unpredictably; sounds usually rejected or marginalised by the ear, by training, by convention as "noise"; that which is on the edge of inarticulacy or incoherence is the area of sound-making that much of my work is concerned with.

Carl Vine

A great deal of my compositional time has been spent rejecting a background in the pure mathematics of music: series, systems, set theory, permutations, self-composing electronic systems and so on. Viewing composition as communication at the deepest subliminal level, my intention is to

Excerpt from Carl Vine's Piano Sonata. © Chester Music

commit no mark to paper or waveform to recording tape in which I do not fervently (and, with fortune, passionately) believe. Without being overly romantic, religious or transcendent, I am committed to conveying as much of *myself* as possible in my music.

The ramifications of this standpoint are manifold. The techniques and materials of the work are always secondary to the message. The "message" is non-verbal, non-specific and non-programmatic, but constitutes that part of my mind that is worth conveying to others. The process of composition then involves finding suitable methods to unleash, order and reveal these "aspects of mind". Recently this process has involved the use of transparently Romantic devices (19th century harmony, monodic melody etc., etc.), but this is not part of my aesthetic, only the method I found to best suit the process at the time.

The most difficult work I have written was the first using simple melody accompanied by evident triadic harmony (*Love Song* (1986)). I knew the work would receive scorn from die-hard contemporary audiences (which it did), and that others would regard the work as evidence of the ultimate sell-out (which they did). I persevered because this particular language was the only direct conduit to my musical thought in those months of 1986. Although I am now moving away from such transparent harmonic-melodic devices, the process remains the same, and whatever techniques I find that best enunciate my musical mind-patterns will be evident in my future work.

Claudio Pompili

My music is concerned with the world of ideas: not necessarily academic (in a derogatory sense) but in the broader, humanistic sense. In many instances, the ideas may be related to literature or the visual arts in any of their forms. Paraphrasing an 11th century Chinese poet, music presents the thing in order to convey the feeling. It should be precise about the thing and reticent about the feeling. The end result - the music, i.e., the notes on paper - is concerned with essentially two aspects: spiritual/inner and temporal/outer.

The latter is about the physical world and usually addresses aspects of the performer or performance linked to the physical sound of the piece, and may concern rhythm, pitch, or type of movement (disjunct, conjunct, contrapuntal, etc.). In the physical domain, I am particularly concerned with the relationship between composer and performer. Like real and dynamic relationships, my music pulls and tugs and stresses the relationship between myself and the commissioner/performer. Oftentimes, I gruel over the notes or musical shapes that I write because I gradually become aware of the demands (ostensibly technical, but with spiritual or emotional implications) that I write into the music.

In the inward mode, I strive to express in music the ineffable - birth, death, love. The link between the inner and outer worlds, and at the basis of my music, is the primordial sexual energy and life-force: this driving force underpins the act of creation.

My working approach to composition is based upon the Italian artisan tradition. I prefer to work on a routine basis with simple musical (intervallic) materials. I have a preference for polyphonic lines or "horizontal" music and rarely for the harmonic or "vertical" domain. My polyphony exhibits a dramatic lyrical quality which for me has analogies in sculpture (Hellenistic, Michelangelo and Bernini) and the Italian Futurists' "lines of force". The sounds and gestures of my music are imbued by the energies of Rock and Roll and, at one and the same time, the microcosmic sound-world of the classical guitar. The influences of *musique concrète*, electronic, and computer musics further colour and inform my instrumental music.

Elena Kats-Chernin

I do not answer the question, I question the answers...

Rather than answering the question, I am questioning the answers. Before I start a piece, I like to eliminate all the "clichés" which are naturally implanted in my mind (due to outside influences, music I have heard, etc.). If there is a certain "cliché" I find that I like in particular, I have to be quite vigilant in questioning its purpose. For instance, the repeated use of a C-minor chord in my most recent piece *Totschki* (Dots) for oboe and clarinet - in what way does this interest me? It is like a loved person - it is this one and no other. There has to be a passion for the material and its possibilities of transformation.

The initial stage of my

The image shows a musical score excerpt. At the top, it is labeled 'Con anima (72)'. The first staff is for 'B.Fl.' (Baroque Flute) and contains a melodic line with various notes and rests, marked with 'fp cresc.' and 'fp'. The second staff is for 'SL.d.' (Solo Drums) and shows a rhythmic pattern with a '3' over a group of notes. The third staff is for 'Chimes' and includes a section labeled 'Bamboo chimes' with a 'p cresc.' marking. The score is written in a standard musical notation with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature.

Excerpt from Claudio Pompili's *Lo spazio stellato si riflette in suoni ...* (1990) for baroque flute and percussion.

Excerpt from *Tótschki* for oboe and clarinet in B flat by Elena Kats-Chernin.

compositional process involves making relevant choices of sound material that exists and vibrates in the environment around me thence using, changing and varying these sounds in such a way as to create new sound structures rather than having an immediate conscious aim to invent new material.

Various aspects of my personal environment and life also contribute to my compositional processes. - Firstly, the music of composers who have influenced me most: Brahms, Schoenberg and Lachenmann. Also the people in my personal musical life: the performers I write for. - Another aspect is the way I live and grow through life experience, reflecting different phases, opinions and emotional states. - Yet another aspect is the work I am involved in. During the last six years, I have regularly composed for theatre productions. This tunes the ear to a certain sort of perception which occurs after having had an experience that has in some way made a deep impression on me. These perceptions may be small but very important to me when composing for understanding the development of a sound: its growth. For example, once during work on music for a dance project, I recorded the sound of a flute blown with great speed of breath across the mouthpiece in a repeated ostinato pattern. Played back pianissimo in the performing space, it sounded like a breath; at its loudest it sounded like a whip-crack, thereby taking on a very threatening character. That the sound of a humming bee can become the roar of an army tank, the cry of a baby transforms to become the moo of a cow (depending on the speed and dynamic level of the recording) is certainly not new. But it is not to be discarded: a change in perception occurs.

The fact that as a composer, I must have the ability to be flexible in response to changing environments around me is extremely important. It has to do with the constant challenging of the validity or worth of one's contribution in a larger sense and the continuous examining of one's consciousness [Bewußtsein]. Everything and everyone around us



Elena Kats-Chernin

changes constantly - sometimes in positive, sometimes in negative directions. Personally, I try to

embrace the new and not to stay within the safety of the known: to go further, I have to actively take a step and if this brings positive changes in me, then a very small portion of the world changes accordingly.

Jennifer Fowler

To be a composer today is to be acutely self-conscious about every aspect of one's craft. Not for us a spontaneous outpouring of notes within an accepted tradition. We must be aware of the work of others: an uneasy, half-reluctant sensitivity to the myriad

One of my main concerns is to develop a language which is flexible enough to allow movement. I don't want to be constrained by a language which is unrelentingly complex or unrelentingly simple, but to build in a bias which allows travel from one thing to another and back again, while retaining an inner consistency. I have always been interested in the process of getting from one thing to another. My aim is to convey a sense of direction in music which is guided by a kind of logic - an evolving logic in which one cannot foresee the next step until it arrives, since there are always lots of possibilities open for the next step, yet which will have a sound of inevitability when it does arrive. It is necessary to keep an awareness of the real time in which music takes place - the pacing and timing of events is crucial.

I like to think that much of my music can be played by "ordinary" performers, not necessarily by virtuosos who specialize in contemporary music. However, it is difficult to reach "ordinary" performers and "ordinary" listeners. Not many people are prepared to step off the edge of the known and familiar. Yet, as a composer, one

LINE SPUN WITH STARS

JENNIFER FOWLER

(♩ = 52-56)

1.

F1.

P mp mf

P mp mf

P mf

© Universal Edition 1983



Helen Gifford. Photo - Therese Radic

has to venture off the edge. Every human mind is biased towards travelling along known paths in known directions. Somehow one must stimulate the imagination into making a step - seeing a vision - having something to say. Then one can communicate the sense of excitement!

Helen Gifford

For me, composition functions best as a form of speculative invention, where a flux of objective/subjective considerations interact to form sounds that are intuitively engineered. Mental strategies on their own are not sufficient but focussing on craft serves to unlock instinctual responses. Whatever the approach, intellectual effort, philosophy held, state of the art, it is unlikely to be comprehensively applied as from the instant of first decision to the continuing moment-by-moment choices other forces are unwittingly brought into play. Genetic disposition, psychic energy, habit and bias all combine to modify initial calculations and so override deliberate intent. Greater rational control may block these reactions but could also cancel out the inspirational subliminal co-ordinative thought processes. I find

that the essence of compositional method lies in determining a balance between conscious commitment and triggered reflex and resolving the conflict that arises from this creative interplay.

Perhaps the most courageous answer to our request is that of Anne Boyd, who says simply What I am is Why. We chose to end with this and Edward Cowie's apropos comparison between composers' self-disclosures and

their commentators' exposés - a danger we foresaw when initiating the project. As Jörg Todzy reportedly remarked (Reiner above) "Why do you compose?" is a dinner-party question ...'; I hope we managed to avoid asking so crass a question, but certainly none of the responses were dinner-party answers.

Anne Boyd

The Boyd capsule

A young child in outback Australia in the '50s; my only conservatoire was the bush. A self-taught recorder player and avid listener to Mr Melody Man on the ABC Children's Hour. In Sydney during the '60s, a young Australian composer passionately committed to music and its creation - by everyone. Need for Identity. Sudden discovery of the European and

AS I CROSSED A BRIDGE OF DREAMS

Anne Boyd

The musical score is for a four-part vocal ensemble (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano. It consists of three systems of staves. The tempo is marked 'Lento (♩ = 63)' and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a mix of whole, half, and quarter notes, with some rests. The lyrics are not visible in the image.

American *avant-garde*, of John Cage, in particular. Marshall McLuhan, the world as a "global village". All musical traditions are equally valid. Australia geographically, part of Asia. European tradition, marginalised, lacked vitality. Grainger and Sculthorpe "Look to Asia". Life-long love affair with *gagaku*, Javanese and Balinese *gamelan* and John Cage's *Silence*. World musical consciousness; inheritance not appropriation. *The Fall of Icarus* (1966), which followed Messiaen, replaced by *The Voice of the Phoenix* (1971), the outsider's discovery of *gagaku*; the sun rises in the East; my personal style begins. Beware, flying too close to

the sun. Refinement. Begin again. Music must be beautiful. It must also serve a social purpose. Psychology: music changes states of consciousness. Ethics. Tuning of ourselves with others and with the world of which we are a part: meditation. Spirituality. Roger Woodward: the performer as catalyst. *Angklung* (1974) for solo piano. Articulated silence. The ghost of Debussy. Again in *As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams* (1975) for unaccompanied voices. From pure timbre, melody and rhythm, discovered afresh in the innocence and pain of a Vietnamese war orphan, *My Name is Tian* (1979), and in 16th century Korean concubines' poetry *Cycle of Love*

(1980). Don'o Kim, a Korean-born Australian: the writer as catalyst. The politics of Love defined as "do your work well with your neighbour". At home overseas with the pragmatic Chinese in the noise and bustle of Hong Kong. The birth of my daughter, Helen. Now connected with the World and with a Loving and Forgiving God. Joy stronger than Pain. Little urge to compose until the tragic necessity of inscribing the martyrdom of the Chinese students in Tiananmen Square: *Black Sun* for orchestra. The San Francisco Bay Area Women's Philharmonic: Feminism. Musical women and women in music. 1990, return to Australia. *Recherche du temps perdu*. A

Composer again. Nostalgia. Mortality. Deconstruction and Reconstruction. Integration. Music is everyone's birthright. Art is doing everything as well as you can. Works, not masterworks. Keep going. Creativity is Discovery - the future is unknown. The creative spiral turns and turns again.

Edward Cowie

When a composer is asked to write something about his or her music, the first problem which comes to mind is that the words will seem like the posturing of a fan. Or worse, the ravings of a critic! This looks terrible in print, but I suppose a composer who is working well *must* be a fan of his/her own music, and most definitely a critic of it as well...

A few years ago, I could and probably would have written as though it was automatically my divine right as an artist to be considered a good one. Popularity and excellence are not synonymous with each other! *Good music* is effective music and that's all there is to say about it. I can't write music driven by facile and quasi-African or Balinese pulses; I can't

124. XX: DIVISIONS OF DOLPHINS. FULL ENSEMBLE. (Clarinet take Bass: flute take Alto)

* This whole movement is to be played from ppp to fff and back to ppp, like one long surge of energy, which gathers force to a big climax, then ebbs away again. However, each minim of material is to be played as a separate unit, with a tiny gap between each, except that these gaps must gradually close to continuous movement at the very fastest pace possible!

Begin in a disjointed way - and slowly, but accelerate rapidly.

Do NOT decelerate as the music gets quieter!!!!

Remember that this is an evocation of the appearance of a school of dolphins at play, which approach from a distance, and then move away again, into the distance....

The FLUTE will determine the moment of beginning and ending.

PLAY FOR ABOUT 2 MINUTES!

write music which sits in E-flat major for five minutes, and which pours out melodies which sound for all the world like attenuated Schubert or Sibelius; (imagine how hard that is!); and I cannot write music which is without discourse and argument.

All of my music is derived from a contemplation of the forces of nature, either as they appear in the raw, or when processed through the written word, or the works of Fine Artists. Andrew Ford has been a relentless critic of what he calls my Romantic tendencies, as though the spirit of romanticism is time-bound to an earlier age. The romantic movement was born of a will to test the mind with the senses, and vice versa. My music is concerned with the abrasion and conflict which is the result of a collision between my sensual makeup and my intellect. Thus, the music is often complex and heavily woven together, not by hard-edged pulse or simple counterpoint, but by a consideration of the significance of harmonic regions (including key centres), and a constant search for analogues with the voices of Gaia.

Favourite composers of mine are Janacek, Sibelius, Berg, Debussy and Ravel ... maybe this reveals a lot more about me than words! I'm tired of the post modernist simplicity ... it's too simple ... and ultimately fails to test the deeper needs of a sensate musical public. I've been an Australian composer since 1988, and I'm proud of it. Australia offers me an enormous palette of possibility in inspirational terms, and there is never enough time to feel in control of what it offers the creative mind. Historically, composers are prone to sniping at each other, often due to insecurity born of the difficulties encountered in the survival of the will to compose. A good deal of Australian music moves me, but most of this is music from composers who are seldom, if ever, played here.

Thank God, there are a few with a conscience about their work. Sculthorpe spoke to me before Christmas last year about his quest for more cerebral music. Maybe it's a sign of the times ... who can tell. Nature challenges me with its multiplicity of forms and dynamics, and I try to write music which

reflects on that kaleidoscope of possibility. No "knee-jerk" here ... just the truth. I'll go along my own path with all the hesitancy and fear I always have, and wait for the Age of Aquarius to be born. It's common to find a composer talking about the most recent work as the favourite, and this is the case with me. A page from my new '48 [5] accompanies this statement ... it's the best I can offer at the moment as an homage to the land which gave the music its impetus and shape...

Editorial Epilogue: On Audiences and Musical Style

"The more people you reach in any mass media form, the less you will be able to say per unit. If you're talking to 3 people, you will affect history just as much as if you talk to 3 million or 30 million people. By the time you're talking to 30 million people, you will say things like 'We've got to balance the budget!'" - Norman Mailer's theory on mass communications.

Surprisingly, very few composers herein broached the contentious issue of audiences - or, more specifically, the relationship (if any) between contemporary musics and contemporary audiences, as seen from the composer's perspective. Irrespective of the truth - or otherwise - of the above rather mischievous quotation, it is our view that, at least as far as access to audiences is concerned, musical style is truly a non-issue, a superficial red herring.

Are not both the *qualitative* aspects of an audience's response and the *quantity* of people reached conceptually equivalent in value? Surely engaging and deeply affecting a solitary human being through exposure to a work of Art is as great a cause for celebration by the Artist as the mass entertainment or amusement of a larger public body? Won't as many people be touched ultimately by the transcending "Arrows of Time and Space" which allow a difficult Artwork's message to emanate outwards geographically and reach

Humanity far into the future, well beyond the isolated and frozen instants of a single restricted, more commercially-oriented or fashionable artistic event that impinges upon only a large, but fixed, group of people at a particular place?

We do hope that this "topographical survey", then, will at least serve as a starting point in the fight against isolation, disconnection and misunderstanding on the local composerly front. And that many will also realize that, although there are myriad musical paths to the Holy Grail, for the true Artist, arguments about exterior compositional things do not fundamentally matter: whatever their stylistic front, somebody, always, will be moved and uplifted by their eloquence. For everything that rises must converge...

Endnotes

1. We indeed found the process of compiling a fair schedule of people to approach for this project to be really difficult, given word maxima and the sheer number of Australian composers. Unfortunately, therefore, only a limited number of composers could be included in the end - 34 to be precise. Whilst we deeply regret the necessity of omitting many significant musicians, we feel that the final selected group is still somehow representative of the diverse creativity of Australia's composers. (It must also be admitted that our own ignorance to some extent mitigated against any form of comprehensivity: for example, during the course of our research, it became increasingly clear that our coverage of composers working outside of the Sydney/Melbourne axis was insufficient. For this we sincerely apologize, and we hope that this lacuna can be addressed by future editorial work emanating from elsewhere.) Anyhow, our taxonomy of criteria for invitation and exclusion can be summarized, briefly, as follows (in no particular order): locale; ethnicity (racial and musical); gender; style and genre;

preferred acoustic medium (electronic or traditional); age / degree of establishment, and exposure to date. (In relation to these last criteria, we tended to be partial towards those [established] composers who have appeared in print only infrequently - if ever - so that many well-known over-60 composers, for instance, were excluded due to their already widespread familiarity; similarly, many composers from the emerging yet-to-become-established under-30 generation, including those who are still students, are also absent herein.) If anybody out there wishes to complain about our list, declaring that it could have been much more equitable, etc., all we can say is ... try making one yourself!

For the record, the following composers declined our invitation because of work commitments, or other reasons: Brenton Broadstock, Gerard Brophy, Moya Henderson, Bozidar Kos, Richard Vella, Nigel Westlake and Gillian Whitehead. (However ... Barry Conyngham, Stuart Hille, Graeme Koehne, Roger Smalley and Caroline Wilkins did not respond at all.) Our "reserves list" comprised: Ros Bandt, Ross Bolleter, Philip Bracanin, Roger Dean, Grahame Dudley, Malcolm Fox, Roger Frampton, Martin Friedel, Les Gilbert, Graham Hair, Sarah Hopkins, Mark Isaacs, Gordon Kerry, Alan Lamb, Michael Lonsdale, David Lumsdaine, Richard Meale, Richard Mills, Colin Offord, Trevor Pearce, Vincent Plush, Mark Pollard, Peter Rankine, Peter Schaefer, Greg Schiemer, Larry Sitsky, Caroline Szeto, Benjamin Thorn, Cathie Travers, Phil Treloar, Martin Wesley-Smith and Julian Yu. Perhaps someone else might like to repeat our exercise with those left out this time?

2. Ann Carr-Boyd's allusion to sonic "gravitational attraction" is characteristically Newtonian: scientific theories have certainly impacted upon musical thought, even if only at a subconscious level in this composer's case. In

fact, each successive cosmological model has (eventually) filtered through to the populace as a general "paradigm shift" that alters our collective psyche, that changes the very way we think. Newtonian Gravity (cf. the hierarchical pitch-gravity of Classical tonality), Quantum Mechanics, Relativity (cf. Schoenberg's dodecaphonic - and cabalistic - system of pitch-relativity) and the more recent Chaos Theory have even changed, progressively, the meaning of "science" itself. So, whilst we do live in a Chaotic/Einsteinian/Quantum Universe, Ann Carr-Boyd's point here is validated by the reality of Newtonian mechanics in the tangible, day-to-day world of human existence. (See also Christopher Small: *Music * Society * Education*, John Calder, London, [2nd Edition] 1980.)

3. Chris Dench: 'Sulle Scale della Fenice: Postscript', *Perspectives of New Music* Vol.29 No.2 p.101, Summer 1991.

Marcellino's concluding triumvirate of "composer", "mystic" and "vision" can be elaborated still further, if one commences with the observation that a "mystic" is somebody who affirms the unity of microcosm and macrocosm - a vision of the "pattern that connects"... Consider the following facts:

- a) In 1965, the American physicists Arno Penzias and Robert Woodrow Wilson discovered uniform background electromagnetic radiation - *a vibration* - throughout the Universe, believed to be an energy halo-remnant of the Big Bang origin of the Universe.
- b) Hindus assert that *OM* is the primal *vibration* of the Universe.
- c) In 1924, Louis-Victor de Broglie suggested his theory of "wave-particle duality". Put succinctly, it states that everything in the Universe, including seemingly solid matter, can be regarded as

either a particle or a waveform - *a vibration* - according to how it is observed. Slightly later, Schrödinger (thence Heisenberg and Dirac) formalized Quantum Mechanics, wherein the motion of an electron about the atomic nucleus is described in terms of *standing waves, somewhat like those in a vibrating body emitting sound*.

- d) Neils Bohr's theory of atomic energy levels (or "quantum shells") accords perfectly well with the above *wave mechanics* model. It is actually a close microcosmic analogue of the Platonic/Pythagorean cosmography postulated 2500 years previously: *The Music of the Spheres*, in which the Universe is visualised as a hierarchy of *vibrating strata*.
 - e) Genesis 1: "And God said..." (the creative fiat - *a vibration*); John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word..." (the Greek original for "Word" is *logos* = purpose, meaning, intellect, mind, word - *purposeful causative vibration*).
 - f) Music manifests itself physically as *purposeful vibration*: composers are therefore imaging reality.
4. Interestingly enough, Colin Bright's compositional philosophy is, on the surface, almost diametrically opposed to my own [Ian Shanahan]: Bright emphasizes the importance of exotericism and sociological relevance for his music; I prefer the esoteric and hence the dealing with "universals" through my music (which, like myth as well, then attains - with luck! - a certain utility or appropriateness, and thus relevance, to modern society). Yet somehow, I feel that we nevertheless achieve the same artistic goals in the end.
 5. 48 short movements for ten instruments and voice, in collaboration with the Australian painter John Coburn, each exploring TWICE the 24 key regions! □